



SCWBC helps a small business owner bring a beach vibe inland

Kim Carter had always dreamed of opening a coffee shop at the beach. It took a few years, but she finally found the courage to fulfill that dream with assistance from the South Carolina Women's Business Center (SCWBC)--a resource partner of the SBA--and open Barefoot Annie's: a café bringing the laidback vibe of a beachside bistro to downtown Simpsonville.

SCWBC business counselor Bill Littlejohn first began working with Carter in late 2003, connecting her with no-cost business planning and marketing assistance through the SCWBC network of consultants. Counselor Larry Jolly helped her to develop a realistic business plan, and when Carter struggled to get public attention for her café's grand opening, Public Relations Consultant Dana Todd secured print and television coverage. The SCWBC also served as a networking tool, introducing first-time entrepreneur Carter to angel investors, who came to her rescue when no bank would agree to financing a start-up business.

"I have had the most wonderful guidance and advice from South Carolina Women's Business Center counselors," Carter says. "As far as I can tell, they aren't actually humans--they're angels disguised as public servants."

"They have thought of things I would never have remembered or known to think of; they've given me great examples of timelines to help me gauge where I should be at different points along the journey."

"They've been my cheerleaders when I've needed them to be, and they've believed in me."

Barefoot Annie's opened in February 2004. Within two years, the coffee shop moved into a larger building, adding a kids' playroom and a lounging area. Carter has also added live music on weekend nights, delighting the customers who crowd her shop.

Although her small business is in the transitional stage--busy but not quite capitalized enough to hire employees--Carter knows that with the SCWBC and her own determination, Barefoot Annie's is poised to become a small business success.